

Charting a new trajectory

Jeff Radebe, The New Age, Johannesburg, 13 March 2017

The ANC launches its discussion documents in order to inform debate and discussion towards the 2017 National Policy Conference, to be held from 30 June to 5 July.

The principal objective of the ANC releasing its discussion documents is to enable all members of the ANC, at all levels of the organisation, to review the implementation of policies adopted at the 53rd National Conference, to assess their adequacy and to propose areas for policy review or new policies towards the 54th National Conference, to be held in December. It is only the National Conference of the ANC that adopts policy.

The ANC's January Statement highlighted that "the ANC has always been a people's Parliament and that it remains vitally important that the decisions of the ANC are shaped by popular mass endorsement at all times".

The ANC looks forward to wide-ranging discussions, highlighting divergent views and intense debate on its policy proposals.

South Africa is a much better place to live in 2017 than 20 or,

even 10 years ago. This is largely attributable to the policies and programmes of the ANC. Poverty has halved between 2002 and 2011, according to StasSA. The number of households with access to energy and electricity services increased from 77% to 86% and water infrastructure services from 80 to 86% between 2002-2014, which exceeds the approved RDP standards.

We are steadily working on the remaining challenges and adopted the National Development Plan (NDP) to eradicate poverty, reduce unemployment and address inequality.

The ANC's strategic objective remains putting in place a united, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous South Africa. Having regard to the many global and domestic changes since the 53rd National Conference as well as the many developments since 2007, the Strategy and Tactics Discussion Document proposes that the organisation completely revises its Strategy and Tactics. The document outlines the ANC's analysis of the global and international balance of forces and how these impact on the attainment of the organisation's ultimate objectives. Arising from this, the document proposes medium and long-term tasks to be undertaken by the ANC and society at large in order to attain the National Democratic Society.

The discussion document puts forward that the world is increasingly characterised by social discord, that at the heart of this social discord are tensions about the distribution of

income and assets in society. South Africa still experiences these challenges along particularly acute racial and class lines and this is in part due to the apartheid legacy and the structural inequalities in our economy.

At the heart of the discussion document remains the ANC's call for the second phase of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR), that requires a more intense focus on the full radical economic and social transformation of our country. Our National Development Plan remains the programme to drive that programme of radical socio-economic transformation.

The Organisational Renewal Discussion Document acknowledges that the conditions under which the ANC operates have changed. The paper further acknowledges that the ANC's own internal challenges, such as social distance between leaders and members, widespread corruption, poor performance in government and abuse of organisational processes for personal gain, will contribute to the ANC's demise if left unattended. The discussion document recognises that the ANC is increasingly losing the trust of the people as illustrated by declining electoral performance and intense public criticism.

The organisation must act urgently to restore its moral character, to win back the trust of the people and to ensure that the ANC is structured optimally to remain the leader of the motive forces for change.

The paper proposes that the ANC should maintain its dual

character as a national liberation movement and a political party.

The document highlights the importance of ensuring that the ANC's most capable cadres must at all times be available to do organisational work and strengthen the ANC's hegemony in society. The paper proposes that the size of the NEC should be reduced and limit the number of NEC members that serve in government (65%) and ensure that leaders are spread throughout all sectors of society.

The paper puts forward that the organisation must establish a Revolutionary Electoral Commission to effectively deal with issues of gatekeeping and manipulation of electoral processes. The paper also proposes that the organisation reviews its nomination and electoral processes to allow for open contestation. Such open contestation must be informed by guidelines and transparency.

The paper proposes that the ANC should have a fully automated electronic recruitment and membership management system. This system should be centrally commanded from the national office and that lower structures should have visibility of the parts that pertain to them. This is part of a broader proposal pertaining to the modernisation and enhanced use of IT in organisational operations.

The Economic Transformation Discussion Document reiterates the ANC's commitment fundamentally changing the racialised and unequal structure of the South African economy. It

acknowledges that South Africa has not made enough progress in reducing unemployment and that we need to increase wages and broad-based ownership and control of the economy. The ANC's programme to transform South Africa's society and economy must, therefore, be judged on the extent to which it radically and systematically improves the lives and opportunities of those who are marginalised and excluded.

The paper proposes a series of measures to ensure that we strengthen radical economic transformation. These measures aim to reduce unemployment and specifically youth unemployment, return the land to our people, increase black ownership and control in the economy, activate small businesses and cooperatives, raise the level of investment, strengthen social justice and conditions for the poor and working class, improve the employment impact of infrastructure projects, reduce inequality and poverty, dismantle monopoly practices and structures, assert South Africa's interests in the global economy, improve integration into the African economy and stimulate inclusive growth.

Communications and the battle of ideas remain a central focus of the ANC. The Communications Discussion Document focuses on how to maintain ANC hegemony in the context of a media environment characterised by greater media convergence (combination of print, radio, TV, radio and online media ownership, production and consumption) and consolidation. Convergence among the dominant media houses continue to entrench editorial positions that seem resistant to the NDR, government programmes and the ANC as

leader of society. The ANC must strengthen its communications capacity, across all levels of the organisation and in government, in order to participate more effectively in the battle of ideas.

The paper further acknowledges that the ANC must lead society in preparation for the impact of 4th Industrial Revolution, characterised and driven by increased use of ICT in all human activities and help different segments of society and the economy to adapt to the disruptive epoch. For this to happen the ANC must be prepared and organised to lead. The paper emphasises that effective participation in the 4th Industrial Revolution means that technological advances must be utilised to address poverty, inequality and unemployment. It proposes, among others, that this area be utilised to build and support ICT SMMEs and innovative start-ups. There is a lot of potential to train and employ young people in the sector.

The Social Transformation Discussion Document highlights that our social transformation objectives include prioritising the rights of our children, the creation of national identity as creation of an inclusive South African society

The Education and Health Discussion Document covers four areas. The document highlights that most of its proposals aim at injecting more energy into implementation in the ANC and in the government, where the government serves as the ANC delivery tool or mechanism.

The International Relations Discussion Document reflects on

the ANC's historic mandate of progressive internationalism that shaped South Africa's current foreign policy outlook. In this regard, it confirms the centrality of Africa in ANC foreign policy and thereby commits to continue with the pursuit of a peaceful and prosperous African continent.

The core theme of the Legislature and Governance Discussion Document is the articulation of the people's power through the state institutions. It is a recognition and appreciation by the ANC that people have entrusted the organisation with political power to advance the needs of the people, therefore the ANC's conduct in state institutions must always reflect the will of the people.

The Peace and Stability Discussion Document highlights that South Africa remains a relatively stable country and that economic challenges, exemplified by unemployment, poverty and inequality, represent a key threat to the country's stability. The paper also highlights threats posed by terrorism, cyber-terrorism and lack of skilled personnel to safeguard against cyber-attacks, illegal migration and others. It proposes a whole range of measures to address these threats, such as improving mechanisms to mobilise communities in the fight against crime, improving intelligence and prosecutorial capacity, introducing lifestyle audits, broadened vetting and financial monitoring to curb corruption in the state.

The release of these documents heralds the start of an intense programme of discussions among ANC structures at all levels. Branches will call meetings and discuss their positions on the

proposals. The provinces will consolidate these branch proposals at provincial general councils. These consolidated proposals will be sent to ANC Headquarters by mid-June 2017. At the same time, the ANC invites engagement from all sectors of society and the NEC sub-committees will embark on a series of consultations with stakeholders and opinion-makers. We have also created a web portal for members of the public to access and comment on the Discussion Documents (www.anc.org.za).

The ANC releases these documents to honour comrade OR Tambo who said, in 1991, that the ANC must at all times remain a people's Parliament and the people must at all times have a say in shaping the positions of the ANC.

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